

SYSTEM FOR INVOKING A PRIVILEGED FUNCTION IN A DEVICE

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is related to a U.S. Patent Application entitled "SYSTEM FOR PROVIDING TRANSITIONS BETWEEN OPERATING MODES OF A DEVICE" having Attorney Docket No. 030620, filed concurrently herewith, assigned to the assignee hereof, and expressly incorporated by reference herein.

BACKGROUND

I. FIELD

[0002] The present invention relates generally to the efficient operation of a device, and more particularly, to a system for invoking a privileged function in a device.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE RELATED ART

[0003] Advances in technology have resulted in the development of a variety of devices for home, office, and personal use. For example, computer systems, such as desktops, notebooks, and tablet computers have become powerful tools for use at home or in office environments. Personal devices, such as wireless telephones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), and paging devices have also become more powerful and are now widely used.

[0004] Many devices now comprise complex hardware and software that run operating systems such as UNIX, LINUX, or similar operating systems. Generally, these operating systems provide for multiple modes of operation. For example, most systems provide privileged and non-privileged modes of operation. Programs executing in the privileged mode of operation are allowed to access memory and system resources without limitation. Programs executing in the non-privileged mode are restricted from accessing certain memory regions and/or device systems. This configuration provides a level of protection to important memory or device functions. For example, by executing third-party applications in the non-privileged mode, important memory regions and device functions can be protected from unauthorized access. Also, such an arrangement allows the system to isolate faults during execution.

[0005] However, in some situations, it is desirable to allow privileged mode functions to be invoked from applications executing in either the privileged or non-privileged mode. For example, it is desirable for a privileged mode application to have access to privileged mode functions, but it is also desirable for an application executing in the non-privileged mode to have access to the same privileged functions. For example, it may be desirable to allow an application to have access to a selected system file, or device hardware, such as a device modem.

[0006] Unfortunately, conventional systems utilize a trap to suspend execution of the non-privileged application while a separate privileged mode "kernel" task performs the requested operation. As a result, the new privileged mode task results in additional scheduling complexity and overhead. There may also be additional system delays in the form of dispatcher latency. Furthermore, the new task may execute at a different priority than the non-privileged application from which it was invoked, thereby further complicating system scheduling and operation.

[0007] Therefore, what is needed is a system that provides a way for an application, executing in either the privileged or non-privileged mode, to invoke a privileged function to execute within the same task as the application, thereby providing access to privileged mode hooks to applications executing under either mode.

SUMMARY

[0008] In one or more embodiments, a system comprising methods and/or apparatus operates to provide access to privileged mode hooks from applications executing in either the privileged or non-privileged mode. For example, in one embodiment, the system provides a function handler that allows an application running in non-privileged mode to execute privileged mode functions within the same task (or execution thread), thereby avoiding task creation, scheduling, and dispatcher latency. The function handler is also accessible to privileged applications to allow those applications to execute privileged functions. Thus, the system maps well into existing software because access to privileged mode functions can be accomplished without changing the existing software model.

[0009] In one or more embodiments, the function handler operates to determine whether a calling application is executing in the privileged or non-privileged mode. If the calling application is executing in privileged mode, the function handler calls the privileged function directly. If the calling application is executing in non-privileged

mode, the function handler generates an interrupt that is processed by, for example, a transition system that allows the privileged function to be called within the same task as the calling non-privileged application. Thus, the function handler operates to provide privileged function hooks to both privileged and non-privileged applications.

[0010] In one embodiment, the calling application passes a function identifier to the function handler. The function identifier identifies functions that are available for execution. In one embodiment, the function handler determines the function from the identifier and calls the function directly. In another embodiment, the function handler generates an interrupt and passes the identifier to the transition system, which uses the identifier to call the requested function after proper validation. The interrupt may be a software, hardware, or exception based interrupt.

[0011] In one embodiment, a method is provided that allows an application to invoke a function on a device, wherein the device includes at least two operating modes comprising a privileged mode and a non-privileged mode, and the function executes in the privileged mode. The method comprises receiving a request from the application to invoke the function and determining the operating mode of the application. The method also comprises invoking the function using an interrupt, if the application is executing in the non-privileged mode, wherein the function is executed within the same task as the application. The method also comprises invoking the function directly, if the application is executing in the privileged mode.

[0012] In another embodiment, apparatus is provided that allows an application to invoke a function on a device, wherein the device includes at least two operating modes comprising a privileged mode and a non-privileged mode, and the function executes in the privileged mode. The apparatus comprises logic that receives a request from the application to invoke the function. The apparatus also comprises logic that determines the operating mode of the application. The apparatus also comprises logic to invoke the function using an interrupt, if the application is executing in the non-privileged mode, wherein the function is executed within the same task as the application. The apparatus also comprises logic to invoke the function directly, if the application is executing in the privileged mode.

[0013] In another embodiment, apparatus is provided that allows an application to invoke a function on a device, wherein the device includes at least two operating modes comprising a privileged mode and a non-privileged mode, and the function executes in the privileged mode. The apparatus comprises means for receiving a request from the

application to invoke the function and means for determining the operating mode of the application. The apparatus also comprises means for invoking the function using an interrupt, if the application is executing in the non-privileged mode, wherein the function is executed within the same task as the application. The apparatus also comprises means for invoking the function directly, if the application is executing in the privileged mode.

[0014] In another embodiment, a computer-readable media is provided comprising instructions, which when executed by a processor in a device, operate to allow an application to invoke a function on a device, wherein the device includes at least two operating modes comprising a privileged mode and a non-privileged mode, and the function executes in the privileged mode. The computer-readable media comprises instructions for receiving a request from the application to invoke the function and instructions for determining the operating mode of the application. The computer-readable media also comprises instructions for invoking the function using an interrupt, if the application is executing in the non-privileged mode, wherein the function is executed within the same task as the application. The computer readable media also comprises instructions for invoking the function directly, if the application is executing in the privileged mode.

[0015] Other aspects, advantages, and features of the present invention will become apparent after review of the hereinafter set forth Brief Description of the Drawings, Detailed Description of the Invention, and the Claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0016] The foregoing aspects and the attendant advantages of the embodiments described herein will become more readily apparent by reference to the following detailed description when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings wherein:

[0017] **FIG. 1** shows one embodiment of a function handler system that provides privileged function hooks to privileged and non-privileged applications executing on a device 102;

[0018] **FIG. 2** shows a detailed block diagram of a device comprising one embodiment of a function handler system; and

[0019] **FIG. 3** shows a flow diagram that illustrates the operation of one embodiment of a function handler system for use in a device.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0020] The following detailed description describes a function handler system that provides privileged function hooks to privileged and non-privileged applications. For example, the system operates to receive function calls from privileged and non-privileged applications, after which, the operating mode of the calling application is determined, and a fast and efficient transition to the privileged function is provided. The function executes within the same thread of execution as the calling application. Thus, the function handler provides privileged function hooks to both privileged and non-privileged applications, which are then able to call privileged functions without a new task being generated, thereby avoiding the overhead of new task creation, scheduling and dispatcher latency.

[0021] In one or more embodiments, the function handler system interacts with a runtime environment (or operating system) executing on the device that is used to simplify operation of the device, such as by providing generalized calls for device specific resources. One such runtime environment is the Binary Runtime Environment for Wireless™ (BREW™) software platform developed by QUALCOMM, Inc., of San Diego, California. The following description describes a device executing a runtime environment, such as the BREW software platform. However, in one or more embodiments, the registration system is suitable for use with other types of runtime environments to provide fast and efficient registration of privileged function hooks in a variety of devices, including generating systems or other controlling or monitoring programs. For example, the devices may include, but are not limited to, desktop computers, notebook computers, handheld computers, and portable devices, such as wireless telephones, pagers, PDAs, email devices, tablet computers, or other type of computing devices.

[0022] **FIG. 1** shows one embodiment of a function handler system **100** that provides privileged function hooks to privileged and non-privileged applications executing on a device **102**. The system **100** may be part of a home computer, office computer, or personal device, such as a wireless telephone or PDA, or any other type of computing device. During operation, one or more applications execute on the device **102** and operate to provide information, functions, and/or services to the device **102**. For example, one type of application may be a viewer application that operates to allow the device **102** to display movies, news, or other types of multimedia content.

[0023] In one embodiment, the device **102** includes a runtime environment **104** (i.e., BREW) that provides at least two modes of operation; namely a non-privileged mode (NP) and a privileged mode (P). The non-privilege mode of operation is used to restrict the access of applications running on the device and to provide fault detection. For example, applications running in non-privileged mode are restricted to selected memory regions and may be denied access to device registers or other resources. The privileged mode of operation allows applications running under this mode to access memory or device resources without limitation.

[0024] When an application executes on the device **102**, it runs under the runtime environment to provide the desired functionality. For example, the application **106** runs on the device **102** under the non-privileged mode (NP), and the application **108** runs on the device **102** in the privileged mode (P). Either of these applications may require functions or system services that are available through a privileged function **110**. For example, the applications may need to access privileged memory or device hardware resources. To obtain these functions or services, the function handler system **100** provides a mechanism that allows either application (**106**, **108**) to call the privileged function through a function handler **112**. When called through the function handler **112**, the function **110** executes within the same thread of execution as the calling application. After the function **110** performs the requested service, program control returns to the calling application.

[0025] As a result, the function handler system **100** provides a fast and efficient mechanism to allow privileged and non-privileged applications to perform privileged functions without the need for a new task to be created and scheduled for execution by the runtime environment, thereby eliminating scheduler complexity and associated dispatcher latency.

[0026] **FIG. 2** shows a detailed block diagram of the device **102** comprising one embodiment of a function handler system. The device **102** comprises processing logic **202** and device resources **206** that are coupled to an internal data bus **204**. The device resources **206** comprise hardware, software, memory, logic, or other resources that allow the device to interface to various internal and external resources, devices, or systems. Also coupled to the processing logic **202** are code memory **208** and data memory **210**.

[0027] In one or more embodiments, the processing logic **202** comprises a CPU, processor, gate array, hardware logic, memory elements, virtual machine, software, I/O

interfaces, and/or any combination of hardware and software. Thus, the processing logic **202** generally comprises logic to execute machine-readable instructions. For example, instructions may be loaded into the device **102** from a computer-readable media, such as a floppy disk, CDROM, Flash memory, or other computer-readable media that interfaces to the device **102** via the device resources **206**. In another embodiment, the instructions may be downloaded into the device **102** from a network resource, such as a network server or any other type of network resource that interfaces to the device **102** via the device resources **206**. The instructions, when executed by the processing logic **202**, provide one or more embodiments of a function handler system as described herein.

[0028] In one embodiment, code memory **208** comprises RAM, ROM, FLASH, EEROM, or any other suitable type of memory, or a combination thereof. The code memory **206** is partitioned into a privileged region (P) **212** and a non-privileged region (NP) **214** through the operation of a memory management unit **216**. The MMU **216** operates to restrict the operation of non-privileged program code so that non-privileged code has limited access rights to selected regions of the code memory **208**.

[0029] The privileged region **212** includes program code that when executed has unrestricted access to the memory or other systems of the device **102**. For example, the privileged code region **212** comprises operating system code (OS), user interface code (UI), validation code, application code (App-P) **108** and privileged function code FUNC **110**. The code shown in the privileged code region **212** is representative of the types of privileged code that may be included in the device **102**. It is also possible that the privileged code region **212** includes other types of privileged code for execution on the device **102**.

[0030] The non-privileged code region **214** includes program code that when executed is restricted to accessing only selected memory regions. For example, the non-privileged code region **214** comprises OS code and application code (App-NP) **106**, and the function handler **106**. In one or more embodiments, the FH **106** may be downloaded to the device **102** from a network or system, installed at device manufacture, or added to the device from a computer-readable media.

[0031] In one embodiment, data memory **210** comprises a privileged region **216** and a non-privileged region **218**. The privileged region **226** comprises data regions that may be accessed only by privileged program code. For example, the privileged data region **216** comprises data used by the OS, UI, validation, App-P and FUNC code. The non-

privileged data region **218** includes data regions that may be accessed by non-privileged program code. For example, the non-privileged data region **218** comprises data used by the non-privileged OS, App-NP, and FH program code. Also coupled to the data memory **210** is a memory management unit (MMU) **220**. The MMU **220** operates to restrict access to the non-privileged and privileged data regions. For example, a non-privileged application is restricted from accessing data in the privileged data region **216**, or data belonging to other non-privileged applications in the non-privileged data region **218**.

[0032] The processing logic **202** also comprises mode logic **222** and interrupt logic **224**. The mode logic **222** comprises a CPU, processor, logic, device registers, software, or any combination of hardware and software that operates to allow a mode change between operating modes of the device **102**. For example, in one embodiment, the mode logic **222** comprises a register whose bits set the operating mode. For example, to switch from privileged mode to non-privileged mode, selected bits in the register are set, which results in a non-privileged stack being restored and program execution continuing in the non-privileged mode.

[0033] The interrupt logic **224** comprises a CPU, processor, logic, software, or any combination of hardware and software that operates to allow an interrupt to be received and processed by the processing logic **202**. For example, the interrupt logic **224** may receive a software interrupt that is generated by program code executed by the processing logic **202**. In one embodiment, the function handler system uses the software interrupt to allow non-privileged program code to execute a privileged function within the same task and priority. In one embodiment, the interrupt logic **224** processes software interrupts, hardware interrupts, program exceptions, or any other type of interrupt as part of the operation of the function handler system.

[0034] It should be noted that the configuration of the device **102** is just one suitable configuration for implementing the described function handler system. It is also possible to implement one or more embodiments of the function handler system using other device configurations, functional elements or element configurations within the scope of the present invention.

[0035] During operation of the device **102**, the processing logic **202** executes non-privileged application code (i.e., App-NP) and/or privileged application code (App-P). When either application requires the services of a privileged function, such as Func **110**, the respective application calls the FH code **112** with an identifier that identifies the

desired function (i.e., Func). The FH code **112** is non-privileged code, and so it may be called from either privileged or non-privileged applications.

[0036] The FH code determines the operating mode of the calling application, and based on the determined mode, executes selected procedures to call the privileged function Func to provide the requested services without creating a new task. The following is a summary of the procedures used by the FH **112** to respond to a request for the services of a privileged function.

1. Receive a request from an application to execute a function associated with an identifier that is passed with the request.
2. Determine the operating mode of the requesting application.
3. If the requesting application is executing in the privileged operating mode, then:
 - a. Look up the requested privileged function based on the identifier.
 - b. Call the privileged function.
 - c. Return to the calling privileged application.
4. If the requesting application is executing in the non-privileged operating mode, then:
 - a. Generate a software interrupt and pass the identifier.
 - b. Transition to a privileged mode interrupt handler.
 - c. Look up the requested privileged function based on the identifier.
 - d. Call the privileged function.
 - e. After the privileged function executes, restore the non-privileged registers
 - f. Return to the calling non-privileged application.

[0037] In one embodiment, the described function handler system comprises program instructions stored on a computer-readable media, which when executed by the processing logic **202**, provides the functions described herein. In one or more embodiments, the computer-readable media comprises a floppy disk, CD, memory card, FLASH memory device, RAM, ROM, or any other type of memory device.

[0038] **FIG. 3** shows a flow diagram **300** that illustrates the operation of one embodiment of a function handler system for use in a device, for example the device **102**. For clarity, the flow diagram **300** will be described with reference to the device shown in **FIG. 2**. It will be assumed that the device is executing a BREW runtime

environment that operates to create a thread of execution **302**. The execution thread **302** represents the execution of privileged or non-privileged applications on the device.

[0039] A system scheduler (not shown) operates to schedule the execution of applications to form the thread of execution **302**. Typically, the scheduler operates to schedule execution based on priority, but may operate to schedule execution based on other criteria. However, the function handler system described herein provides a function handler that operates within the same thread of execution as a calling application, thereby avoiding new task creation, associated scheduler complexity, and possible dispatcher latency.

[0040] The thread of execution **302** represents the execution of either the privileged application (App-P) or the non-privileged application (App-NP). The executing application may be a viewer application that allows the device to display various multimedia content to the device user. As the application executes, a requirement for the services of a privileged function (Func) occurs. To obtain services from the privileged function, the application calls the FH **304** and passes an identifier that identifies the privileged function Func. It will be assumed that privileged functions available in the system have an associated identifier that can be discovered by the executing application. In one or more embodiments, the following functions are performed by the processing logic **202** executing program instructions stored in the code memory **208**, which may also process data in the data memory **210**.

[0041] At block **306**, the FH **304** obtains the identifier that identifies the privileged function Func. For example, the identifier may be passed to the FH in a register associated with the processing logic **202** or other memory location in the data memory **210**.

[0042] At block **308**, a test is performed to determine if the calling application is executing in the privileged or non-privileged mode. For example, the processing logic determines the current processing mode of the application by evaluating the processor status registers. If the calling application is executing in the non-privileged mode, the method proceeds to block **310**. If the calling application is executing in the privileged mode, the method proceeds to block **312**.

[0043] At block **312**, it has been determined that the application is executing in the privileged mode. The FH code **304** looks up the requested privileged function (i.e., Func) based on the received identifier. For example, the processing logic **202** uses the identifier to access a data structure that maps available functions to identifiers to

determine the function being requested by the calling application. The data structure may be stored in the data memory **210**.

[0044] At block **314**, the privileged function Func is called to perform the requested service. For example, the privileged function may access a system file or a hardware resource. In one embodiment, the processing logic executes program instructions to call the privileged function Func. Upon execution, the function Func may also perform various parameters checks and validations to verify that the calling application has passed legal and valid parameters. Once the function Func has completed executing, program flow returns to the thread of execution **302**.

[0045] Therefore, if a privileged application calls the function Func through the FH **304**, the FH **304** operates to determine the requested function, based on the identifier, and call that function to perform the requested service. If a non-privileged application calls the function Func through the FH **304**, the FH **304** operates as follows to provide the requested service.

[0046] At block **310**, the FH **304** generates an interrupt that operates to request that the operating mode of the device to transition to the privileged mode **316** so that the privileged function Func can execute. The interrupt may be a software interrupt or any other type of interrupt that may be generated by the FH **304**. The interrupt includes the identifier passed from the calling application. For example, the interrupt may be generated and/or processed by interrupt logic **224** shown in **FIG. 2**.

[0047] After the interrupt is generated, program execution flows to privileged mode program code **316** where the privileged function Func is call within the same task as the calling application.

[0048] A brief description of the operation of program code **316** is provided below. However, for a more detailed description of the operation of the program code **316**, the reader is referred to U.S. Patent Application entitled "SYSTEM FOR PROVIDING TRANSITIONS BETWEEN OPERATING MODES OF A DEVICE" having Attorney Docket No. 030620, which is incorporated by reference herein.

[0049] After a switch to a privileged mode stack occurs and validation of the passed function identifier, the program execution flows to block **318**.

[0050] At block **318**, the desired privileged function is determined based on the passed identifier. For example, a data structure stored in the data memory **210** is search by the processing logic **202** based on the identifier to identify the desired function Func.

[0051] At block **320**, once the privileged function Func is determined, it is called. For example, in one embodiment, the processing logic **202** executes instructions stored in the code memory **208** to call the function Func. The privileged function may operate to open a particular system file that contains data for use by the calling non-privileged application. In one embodiment, additional parameters are passed to the privileged function from the application. For example, the parameters may further indicate or define the type of service being requested by the non-privileged application. The privileged function operates to validate these parameters to verify that execution of the privileged function will not exceed the privileges granted to the application. For example, the function operates to validate the parameters so that execution of the function will not exceed memory restrictions placed on the application.

[0052] At block **322**, after the function Func is performed, the non-privileged mode registers are restored, including the non-privileged mode stack. The program execution returns to the non-privileged application thread **302** as shown at path **324**.

[0053] It should be noted that the program flow diagram **300** illustrates just one embodiment and that changes, additions, or rearrangements of the program elements may be made without deviating from the scope of the invention.

[0054] Accordingly, while one or more embodiments of methods and apparatus for a function handler system have been illustrated and described herein, it will be appreciated that various changes can be made to the embodiments without departing from their spirit or essential characteristics. Therefore, the disclosures and descriptions herein are intended to be illustrative, but not limiting, of the scope of the invention, which is set forth in the following claims.

I CLAIM: